



# The Nature of Blood

*Caryl Phillips*

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## **The Nature of Blood** Caryl Phillips

A German Jewish girl whose life is destroyed by the atrocities of World War II . . . her uncle, who undermines the sureties of his own life in order to fight for Israeli statehood . . . the Jews of a 15th-century Italian ghetto . . . Othello, newly arrived in Venice . . . a young Ethiopian Jewish woman resettled in Israel. These are the extraordinary people who inhabit Caryl Phillips' eloquent and moving new novel, and whose stories are connected by circumstance, spirit, and blood across the centuries.

## **The Nature of Blood Details**

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Author : Caryl Phillips

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## From Reader Review The Nature of Blood for online ebook

### Silencia says

This fucked me up in the best way. I love the writing style, and even though we saw so little of each of them, I felt really intensely connected to the characters. Especially Eva. God, Eva.

I mean, it's about the Holocaust in some ways, and in other ways just about the nature of racism and evil and all the rest of it. So it's...heavy, and it's hard. But it's a short read and if you can stomach its heavy, dark subject matter, I highly recommend it.

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### Beth says

A powerful novel about the nature of race and ethnicity. Phillips' ability to enter the minds of a young Jewish woman and Othello before Shakespeare's story is beyond amazing. He illustrates how Jews, African-Americans, Othello, Jewish Ethiopians, Israel's founders--men and women--share the same traumas and insights. His book is the epitome of a "new ethnicity." What a brilliant, brilliant writer.

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### Delvi Sinambela says

descriptive, intense. mr. phillips again, tried to dissect a man and the roots that created the man. history, origin... unquenched obsessions that he has. 'a river should never forget its spring.' someone said this somewhere in the page.

i was captivated by the story of an african noble turned slave. pride turned into shame. and who creates the scale anyway. then again, a jewish woman in europe. trying to conceal her roots. again.. why should anyone be?

his stories took me traveling inside so many skin color. asking if any is different. then... after some of his book. i learn myself anthropology. hahaha.

it's a good book.... read over a decade ago. but i still remember how i felt when i read it. rather good i say... or maybe i was just young... and too easy to be impressed.

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### Alison says

This was my first time reading Phillips, and I was amazed that nobody had recommended him to me before; I'll be reading the rest of his books in short order. Phillips is careful to particularize the experiences of different people/s (both the individual and, more to the point, the group), yet his use of collage reveals surprising affinities between the stories. "Affinities" is the best word I can think of to describe that effect,

and these affinities are the reason you should read the book. There is no true link or likeness between the stories of Othello and of Eva, the concentration camp survivor whose story also bears an affinity to the life of Anne Frank, but there are unexpected affinities that result from juxtaposition, word choice, and the other intervening stories. It's a subtle, artful effect.

<http://alisonkinney.com/2014/07/24/ca...>

Thanks!

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### **Annie says**

4 stars

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### **Graham Crawford says**

I recognize that it is quite a good novel, but alas it failed to connect with me. The prose sections dealing with the Holocaust narrative were well done - grim and emotive as one might expect, but the curious structure of this book - cut up dictionary definitions and snippets of an Othello story were distracting. In some ways this book was made smaller (for me) by the sum of its parts.

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### **Carla says**

Num livro pouco coeso, consegui retirar "alimento" da história de Eva.

(Não sei porque ali está a história paralela do General Africano ao serviço da República de Veneza)

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### **James Mai says**

A must read.

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### **Elena Sala says**

THE NATURE OF BLOOD was written by Caryl Phillips, a West Indian author raised in England, who has written many texts, fiction and nonfiction, which engage with the subject of diasporic postcolonialism. In his novels, Jews and Blacks appear as co-sufferers of the dark side of Modernity.

In this ambitious novel, he interweaves several different narratives and points of view.

The main story is Eva Stern's, a young German Jew who survives the loss of her family and her own suffering in a concentration camp in WWII. However, her "liberation" doesn't seem to free her from the pain of the memories or the guilt of having survived when so many died horrendously.

There is also the story of her uncle Stephan, who abandons his wife and child to participate in the building of the new state of Israel. And there is a retelling of the story of Othello and his passion for Desdemona and his

fruitless attempt to blend into Venetian society.

The text requires some effort to negotiate its steep shifts in temporality and points of view, which make the reader experience the kinds of disorientation and displacement felt by the characters themselves. The tone is bleak and tragic: there is nothing in this novel like the slapstick comedy you will find in Zadie Smith's novels. Indeed, Eva's first person narrative is modelled, to a certain degree, on Anna Frank's spare and precise record of her life in hiding. In Phillips' work there is no question of homogenising different histories of persecution and displacement into a joyous "migrant experience" like we can find in Smith's novels. There is no laughter and no hope of an easy solution for the problem of the diasporic postcolonial identity. Possibly, Phillips is not read so much because of this.

Phillips has an original voice and his texts deserve to be read much, much more. If you are seriously interested in the subject of postcolonialism and diaspora this book is a must read.

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### **Hannah says**

First of all, this is a novel that I had to read for a class. Aside from being a genre that I would probably never pick up personally, I can see why it is a good one.

I think it has a good writing style, it was not dragging too much. The non-chronological narration and the change of the narrator was confusing sometimes, but it made it more interesting.

Again, I can see why it is a good novel, but this was something I had to read and not something I would look forward to reading.

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### **A. Springer says**

Terrible, terrible, terrible. The single worst book I was ever forced to read. Stupid, self-important, offensive, badly-written, condescending... just awful on every level.

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### **Vivienne says**

A powerful novel that despite its short length tackles deep themes linked to 'otherness', race and anti-Semitism.

In terms of Holocaust literature it is harrowing in its descriptions. Certainly a tragedy in the Shakespearian sense.

It is beautifully written.

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### **Hil Sloan says**

Really thought-provoking novel - quite disturbing as the overall theme is about man's inability to be accepting of others who don't really fit in.

At first the seemingly unconnected stories which pop up at random rather irritated me as I was keen to follow

Eva's story of surviving the Holocaust. But it becomes clear that each of these stories serve a dual purpose: first to show that throughout history the same terrible treatment of fellow humans has continued to be repeated and secondly to encourage comparisons between Eva and other individuals suffering persecution.

The theme of integration - or lack of - is touched upon on almost every page. A few examples - Eva's parents inability to get on with each other stemmed from the class system in their childhood; Margot, despite attempts to integrate her into Christian society, was kept alienated; Eva found it impossible to relate to other prisoners from Eastern Europe; Uncle Stephan in Palestine still found it impossible to connect with other Jews; Malka could not understand why they had been encouraged to move to Israel when it was apparent that they would never be accepted; etc etc

In some of the stories Phillips develops this theme a stage further. It is one thing to be rejected by society as a whole for reasons of faith, culture and skin colour but when that rejection comes following a period of apparent acceptance the result is complete bewilderment and despair. In particular the Jews of Portobuffole, accepted as part of the established community were used as scapegoats to explain the disappearance of a young boy; to be cont.

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## **Gary says**

This thoughtful, passionate and heady novel threads together stories of people separated by time and space but linked together in one way or another however tenuously.

What threads the different sagas together is the theme of the loneliness of the outsider struggling to find their way in an alien society.

The novel includes stories written from the viewpoint of a German Jewish girl who survives the horrors of the Holocaust and the British internment in Cyprus, where the British interned hundreds of thousands of Jews to prevent them returning to their ancient homeland, in order to appease Arab greed. Vivid descriptions of the horrors of the Holocaust and the shattered lives of the survivors.

After all this is it too much for the world to live with a tiny homeland (smaller than Wales) for the Jewish people where they can live in safety in peace, in a region where Arabs control 22 states?

It also focuses on her uncle, who sacrifices all to go to the then 'Palestine' to rebuild the Jewish homeland, and of an Ethiopian Jewish girl's life decades later as a new refugee in Israel.

The trial of the Jews of the Venice ghetto faced with persecution and prejudice and the horrific blood libels designed to frame them for persecution (relevant at a time when modern blood libels are today used to justify hatred of Israel and the Jewish people today in order to prepare the world for another Holocaust).

Through his observations of the Jewish Ghetto in Venice, the newly arrived Black Moorish general in Venice, Othello, is introduced to the saga-serving in a society both alien and hostile, and his romance with the beautiful daughter of a wealthy Venetian nobleman.

The concurrent theme is one of suffering, survival and renewal, the tragic repetitions of history, and the voices and emotions of the very real individuals caught up in the vast and cruel sweep of history.

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## **Ann Tonks says**

I'm ambivalent about this book. Perhaps I'm just not smart enough to get it. Apart from the forced link between Othello and the Venetian ghetto and a sense of both the "moor" and the Jews as outsiders, I didn't understand the structure of the book. Eva's story is hauntingly sad and a different perspective on the

Holocaust experience but I was still left bemused by the point of the interlinking stories.

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